



Photo by Debbie Accame

The Thursday Before the State Football Championships

By Steve Inskeep, Host NPR's *Morning Edition*

Thanksgiving usually falls on the Thursday before the state football championships in Indiana. That's how you can tell when it is. The "fourth Thursday in November" has nothing to do with it. When I was growing up, we attended Thanksgiving on my mother's side of the family – including my uncle Bud. Larry "Bud" Wright is the coach of the Sheridan High School Blackhawks. His teams have won seven state championships in Class A football, which is the competition among small schools. So Thanksgiving has often come right before Sheridan's big game, and Larry would have to sit through all of Thanksgiving answering questions about his team, and politely hearing out the opinions and advice of his relatives. In the bad years, Sheridan is eliminated before Thanksgiving, and Bud still receives opinions and advice. Last year, 2006, was a good year: Sheridan won the title, and Bud's son Kevin Wright coached a team to the championship for the largest schools. I missed last year's Thanksgiving, but the anticipation in that room must have been something. And that's Thanksgiving at its best: a moment to pause, to sit on the floor in a crowded room, to talk with people who feel no need to impress each other, to appreciate your family, and to look forward to the glimmering hopeful things to come.